1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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this one source that Nuer attention, instead of being diffused in a variety of directions, tends, with undue exclusiveness, to be focused on this single object and to be introvertive, since the object has a certain identity with themselves. We will now examine briefly some linguistic material wherein we shall perceive further evidence of this hypertrophy of a single interest and of the identification of men with cattle to which I have alluded.

VIII

Linguistic profusion in particular departments of life is one of the signs by which one quickly judges the direction and strength of a people's interests. It is for that reason, rather than for its intrinsic importance, that we draw the reader's attention to the volume and variety of the Nuer cattle vocabulary. Like all the pastoral Nilotes they use an enormous number of words and phrases about cattle and the tasks of herding and dairy-work, and from this vast assortment we select for comment a single class: the terms by which they describe cattle, chiefly by reference to their colours.[1] These terms are more than a linguistic technique which enables Nuer to speak of cattle with precision in situations of practical husbandry and in the many social contexts in which they figure, for they establish associations on the one hand between wild creatures and cattle and on the other hand between cattle and their masters; they furnish certain ritual categories; and they greatly enrich the language of poetry.

In naming a Nuer cow one has to notice its colours and the way in which they are distributed on its body. When it is not of one colour the distribution of colours is the significant character by which one names it. There are ten principal colour terms: white (*bor*), black (*car*), brown (*lual*), chestnut (*dol*), tawny (*yan*), mouse-grey (*lou*), bay (*thiang*), sandy-grey (*lith*), blue and strawberry roan (*yil*), and chocolate (*gwir*). When a cow is of a single colour it is described by one of these terms. An animal may combine two or more colours, but a combination of more than two, known as *cuany*, is very rare. Normally there is a combination of white with one other colour and twelve common distributions of this com-

[1] I have recorded some information on this neglected subject among a neighbouring people in 'Imagery in Ngok Dinka Cattle-Names', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 1934.

[pp. 42-43 contain no textual material]

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[p. 42]

1. *Jak* (brown or tawny)
Jak (other colours)

2. *Kuc* (all colours)

3. *Gilkjak* (brown and tawny)
Kuc (other colours)

4. *Kal* (brown and tawny)
Bil (other colours)

5. *Rol* (all colours)

6. *Par* (brown and tawny)
Rial (other colours)

FIG. 8. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

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[p. 43]

7. *Kwac* (all colours)

8. *Wac* (black)
Gwong (mouse-grey)

9. *Nyal* (brown and tawny)
Cuor (other colours)

10. *Rmg* (all colours

11. *Ding* (brown and tawny)
Kar (other colour

12. *Kwei* (all colours)

FIG. 9. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

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bination are shown in Figs. 8 and 9. There are, however, many more combinations, at least twenty-seven, one of the commonest being varieties of a striped or brindled coat (*nyang*).

In describing a beast one often denotes both the form of distribution and the colour that is combined with white. Thus an ox may be entirely mouse-grey (*lou*); have a mainly mouse-grey colour with a white face (*kwe looka*), white back (*kar looka*), white splash on barrel (*bil looka*), white shoulder (*rol looka*), or white belly (*reng looka*): be brindled mouse-grey (*nyang looka*): be white with large mouse-grey patches (*rial looka*), medium mouse-grey patches (*kwac looka*), or a mouse-grey rump (*jok looka*), &c. There are at least a dozen terms describing different combinations of white and mouse-grey and there are a similar number of terms for a combination of white with each of the other colours. A further example is given to illustrate the wide range of variations: a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be found on a cow of any colour, e.g. *rol cara*, *rol yan*, *rol thiang*, *rol yili*, &c. There may also be a combination of one form of distribution with another and, in this case, the two combinations constitute the terms of reference and there is no need to denote the colouring that occurs in them, e.g. a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be combined with a white face (*kwe roal*), black spots (*rol kwac*), speckling (*rol cuor*), brown patches (*rol paara*), white back (*kar roal*), white face and black ears (*kur roal*), &c. There are at least twenty-five terms which include the *rol* distribution, and the other distributions likewise have wide ranges of combinations with colours and with one another.

As I shall elsewhere, and at length, analyse the principles of colour terminology and abstract the rules of nomenclature,[1] I need no more than remark here that it is evident from the few examples cited that there are several hundred colour permutations.

Some colours and combinations of colours are associated with animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, and this association is often indicated by secondary terms of reference and by ritual usages, e.g. *lou* (mouse-grey) is the bustard, *nyang* (striped) is the crocodile, *lith* (sandy-grey) is associated with *manlieth*, the grey kestrel, *thiang* (bay) is the tiang, *dwai* (brown with white stripes) is the female sitatunga, *kwe* (white-faced) is the fish eagle, *kwac* (spotted) is the leopard, *cuor* (speckled) is the vulture, *gwong* (spotted) is the guinea-fowl, *nyal* (brown-spotted) is the python, &c. These linguistic identifications and other colour associations lead to many

[1] 'Nuer Cattle Terms', to appear in *Sudan Notes and Records*.

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fanciful elaborations of nomenclature, e.g. a black ox may be called *rual mim*, charcoal-burning or *won car*, dark clouds; a brown ox *riem dol*, red blood, or *rir dol*, red tree-cobra; a blue roan ox *bany yiel* after the blue heron; a mouse-grey ox *duk lou*, the shady gloom of forests, &c. These fancy names add greatly to the list of Nuer cattle terms.

Besides the vast vocabulary which refers to colours, distribution of colours, and colour associations, cattle can also be described by the shape of their horns and, as the horns of oxen are trained, there are at least six common designations in use besides several fancy names. Words denoting shape of horns add considerably to the number of permutations, for they can be combined with many of the colour and distribution terms, e.g. a sandy-grey cow with horns which almost meet in a curve above the head is a *duot lieth*, a shorthorn with *rial* markings is a *cot rial*, a brindled ox with one horn trained across its face is a *gut nyang*, &c. The ears of cattle, sheep, and goats are often cut in different shapes and it is permissible, and with sheep and goats usual, to describe them by reference to these incisions. Sheep and goats have very different mixtures of colours from those one finds among cattle, but the same terms can be used to cover all combinations, because they are never exact descriptions of colour dispositions but represent ideal distributions, to one or other of which any actual disposition approximates.

A further range of permutations is created by prefixes which denote the sex or age of an animal, e.g. *tut*, bull, *yang*, cow, *thak*, ox, *nac*, heifer, *ruath*, male calf, *dou*, female calf, *kol*, calf which has not yet begun to graze, and so forth. Thus one may speak of a *tut ma kar looka*, *dou ma rial*, *thak ma cuany*, &c. Indeed, if we were to count every possible mode of referring to animals of the flocks and herds they would be found to number several thousand expressions—an imposing and complicated system of ramifications which bears eloquent witness to the social value of cattle.

Furthermore, as we have mentioned, every man takes one of his names from the term by which one of his oxen is described, and these ox-names are the preferred salutations among age-mates. A youth generally takes his first ox-name from the beast his father gives him at his initiation, but he may later

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551 take further names from any oxen of his herd which delight him. Men salute one another with these names and shower them, with many a fanciful elaboration, on their companions at dances. They also chant them when they display themselves with their oxen in camps, sing them in their poems, and shout them when they spear men, animals, or fish.

551 192 A man may be called by the identical name of his ox, e.g. Bi(l)rial, Kwac(c)uor, Werkwac, and so forth, but generally one part of the term is dropped and the other part is prefixed by a new term, usually descriptive of some ornament worn by the ox or some characteristic of it, not employed in defining its own name, e.g. *luth*, a large bell (Fig. 4), *gier*, a small bell, *lue*, a long tassel, *dhuor*, a short tassel (Plate IV), *wak*, the tinkling of an ox-bell, *lang*, a brass ring attached to an ox's collar or tethering-cord (one can be seen on the animal in the foreground of Plate II), *rot*, bellowing of oxen, *cwai*, fatness, *boi*, shining whiteness, &c. Thus a man whose favourite ox has *rial* distribution of colours may be called Luthrial, Gierrial, Luerial, Dhuorrial, Boirial, and so on. When ox-names are used between age-mates at dances they are generally preceded by dance-names which are selected to harmonize with the ox-names, euphony being considered of great importance in all these word formations. Ox-names are voluminous and abstruse, and in describing them, as in describing cattle-colours, I have not only made a meagre selection from the wealth at my disposal, but have also chosen for illustration the simplest examples and neglected the more obscure.

533 Names of cattle, especially of oxen, and ox-names of men are used profusely in songs. The Nuer, like most pastoral peoples, are poetic and most men and women compose songs which are sung at dances and concerts or are composed for the creator's own pleasure and chanted by him in lonely pastures and amid the cattle in camp kraals. Youths break into song, praising their kinsmen, sweethearts, and cattle, when they feel happy, wherever they may be. I give a free translation of the first verses of two songs, the first sung by girls as they sit together in the evening after the day's work is done, and the second sung by its creator when he is happy.

539 1. The wind blows *wirawira*;[1]
Where does it blow to?

[1] Literally 'My wind'. The singer runs against it and seems by so doing to add to its strength. This is the north wind which blows at the time of rich

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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192 183 It is not necessary to add more examples of cattle-terms and their uses to demonstrate that we are dealing with a galaxy of words in the arrangement of which a thesaurus of some magnitude might be compiled. I need only emphasize that this intricate and voluminous vocabulary is not technical and departmental but is employed by every one and in manifold situations of ordinary social life. I have only treated a fragment of a fragment of the linguistic field relating to cattle. I could enter into further detail, but, at best, I have only surveyed, and in an amateur way, that field, which invites broader and more specialist research. My purpose has been to draw attention to it and to show how a study of the dominant interest of Nuer might be approached from this angle. The subject is necessarily vast, because, as we have seen, it is not possible to discuss with Nuer their daily affairs, social connexions, ritual acts, or, indeed, any subject, without reference to cattle which are the core round which daily life is organized and the medium through which social and mystical relations are expressed. Nor is Nuer interest in cattle confined to their practical uses and social functions, but is displayed in their plastic and poetic arts, in which they are the chief theme. The over-emphasis on cattle is thus strikingly shown in language, which, moreover, by compelling reference to cattle, whatever be the subject of speech, continually focuses attention on them and makes them the superlative value of Nuer life.

IX

231 183 Another way in which Nuer engrossment in cattle can be illustrated—our last exemplification thereof—is by noting how readily and frequently they fight about them, for people risk their lives for what they greatly value and in terms of those values.

183 231 721 578 At the present time cattle are the main cause of hostility towards, and suspicion of, the Government, not so much on account of present taxation as of earlier tax-gathering patrols which were little more than cattle raids and of the avowedly plundering expeditions of the Egyptian Government era that preceded them. Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed towards appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds. Cattle have also been the

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Leopard-Skin Chief then performs certain ritual acts to remove all fear of future contamination between the two groups and to remove the taboo on eating together. A bull called *yang tul coka* is sacrificed and ceremonially divided between the *ji ran* and the *ji thunge*, who partake together of its meat. This ceremony was even more rarely performed than the *cuil*, though instances of its occurrence in the past are quoted, but in all cases the parties were closely related in the lineage system and occupied adjacent territory.

Terminology of Cattle Paid as Compensation

A list of cattle paid in compensation, sacrificed by the Leopard-Skin Chief, or paid to him as fees, is as follows:

ruath birre: 'the bull-calf of blood-letting', the bull-calf sacrificed at the ceremony of letting the killer's blood.

yang kweini or *yang jal:* 'the cow of the journey', paid by the *ji thunge* to the Leopard-Skin Chief early in the proceedings as a reward for his services in going backwards and forwards between the two parties.

yang jyup: 'the cow of the axe', a cow given to the *buthni* relatives of the *ji ran* by the *gwan buthni* of the *ji thunge*. *Buthni* relatives are representatives of a collateral branch of the lineage (*thok dwiel*), so that this transaction extends the processes of appeasement and compensation beyond the more immediate kinsmen of the killer and the killed to their lineages as a whole. The solidarity of the patrilineal descent group is thus emphasized, and the way in which all persons within it are involved is publicly acknowledged. Traditionally the *yang jyup* should be the first cow to be handed over.

ruath kethe: 'the bull-calf of the gall-bladder', a bull-calf speared by the Leopard-Skin Chief at the actual ceremony of handing over the compensation cattle. It is subsequently eaten by the *ji ran* as a sign that they have accepted the compensation.

tut ghok: 'the bull of the herd', a bull sacrificed by the Leopard-Skin Chief and partaken of by the *ji ran*—a sacrifice to ensure that they will not be contaminated by drinking the milk of the cows included in the compensation.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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ruath riem and *yang kwac:* 'the bull-calf of the blood' and 'the cow of the Leopard-Skin'. These cattle are chosen from among the indemnity by the Leopard-Skin Chief and retained by him as fees, though the *ruath riem* is usually given to his personal assistant.

ghok pale loic: 'the cattle of the easing of the heart'. These consist of the *yang tuoke*, 'the cow of the cooking-pot' (*tok*), and a cow-calf referred to as *yang cak*, 'the cow of the milk', which are given to the dead man's mother as a token of her services in cooking for him and suckling him. The terms also bring out incidentally the idea that the ban on eating and drinking together has now been removed.

yang tul coka: 'the cow of the broken bone'. This is usually a bull or a barren cow sacrificed at either the *cuil* or *math* ceremony, divided, and partaken of by the *ji ran* and *ji thunge* together. This sacrifice is held to remove all fear of spiritual contamination in the future.

Rates of Compensation

682 Traditionally among most Nuer tribes, the number of cattle demanded as compensation for homicide was 40. A few tribes state that 50 were demanded for death caused by an injury from a fighting-spear (*mut*) and 40 for death caused by a wound from a fish-spear (*bith*) or a stick (*ked*) or by some other means. The use of a fighting-spear implies full intent and possibly a degree of premeditation since a fighting-spear has no other use. Moreover, to the Nuer, the probable consequence of a thrust with a spear is death, whereas use of the stick usually results in an injury which is not fatal. I do not know why a fish-spear is considered in the same category as a stick. It is, of course, essentially an economic tool rather than a weapon, but fish-spears are normally carried and used in war. It must be assumed that the use of a fighting-spear was considered a greater wrong and that a higher rate of compensation was demanded simply because the reaction of indignation was more intense. The rates of compensation were at one time reduced in some Nuer Districts to 20 head of cattle instead of 40 or 50, and there is now no distinction made according to the weapon used. As we shall see later, the indemnity is now standardized at 50 head of cattle, of which 10 go to the Government as a fine.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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transmitted to paper. The two missions working among the Nuer have a limited number of school-books printed in this language. The American Mission has six readers, one of which contains much folk-lore. They also have a translation of Dr. Mary Blacklock's book on Hygiene. But the white man when he arrives in Nuerland has but little to help him to a quick understanding of the language. A Nuer-English dictionary has just been published, and an English-Nuer dictionary will soon be ready for the publisher. In each a few pages of Nuer grammar has been included. But so far the white man has had to extract his knowledge of the language from the Nuer himself, and this process takes time—and patience. 214

The Nuer language as I have found it has an extensive vocabulary. I have listed over 3,100 words in the above mentioned dictionary, many of them root-forms only, and I constantly find how limited my knowledge of the language is. One finds new words each day. It seems like an endless mine. 192

In working on this language distinctive points are noted. 193

The same forms are used for all genders in pronouns. A change of vowel or an additional vowel is common in forming the possessive of a noun. Many proper names are the same in both masculine and feminine cases, but the prefix *nya-* or *nyan-* is always used with the feminine. The supply of adverbs seems inadequate, but possibly we have not discovered them all. Also the names of many virtues are lacking, and we frequently find that we need more adjectives. Change of inflection plays an important part in this language in making negative forms and plurals. 192 193

Nuer sentences are short. The Nuer seems to prefer a new sentence instead of using many connectives. He often states a fact, modifying it in the next sentence, e.g. 'Every one went away, I only was left.'

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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538 The Nuer language has a wealth of animal and bird stories, tales of the origin of the tribe and folk-lore. Also games, songs, riddles, and superstitions. All of these are as yet practically untouched by the pen. A sort of cannibal-ogre combination, capable of changing into an animal, is usually a prominent character in their folk-lore.

• 192 The language contains no word for 'thank you' as far as I have delved into it, but one does not need to be in Nuerland long to discover that the Nuer has a word for 'I am mistaken', and is willing to use it.

TIME, SEASONS, MOON, AND STARS.

[805] 821 The Nuer gauges time by moons, the light or dark of the moon. He knows the stars, and has names for many of the constellations. He is a keen observer of them and makes his own observations concerning them. Orion's belt is called 'gat rum juk'. One star is supposed to be a man leading a horse, the second star is supposed to be the horse, while the third star is another man driving the horse as he follows him.

The evening star is called 'Lipai chiing', as it is considered to be like a girl in the village waiting for the moon to come up and when it does come up, she goes away with it. Hence the name, which means 'wait in the village for the moon'.

The Southern Cross, the Little Dipper and other constellations are also noted and named.

825 805 The Nuer firmly believes, as already noted, that the cattle see the new moon the night before it is visible to the human eye. I have frequently asked them concerning this. The date upon which the cattle see the new moon always seems to be the date specified upon the calendar as the date when the new moon should be visible. Yet the Nuer has no calendar.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

ashes from it are smeared over the body. Cattle urine is used in churning and cheese-making and also for washing. Evans-Pritchard rightly calls the Nuer 'parasites of the cow'.(1)

The social importance of cattle among the Nuer

The fact that cattle have more than an economic value may be amply illustrated from the part they play in social life.

Relationships with neighbouring tribal groups are partly dependent on the value attached to cattle. The Nuer are contemptuous of those who have no cattle, while they raid those who have in order that they may augment their own herds. A man will defend his cattle to the last and will die for the sake of the herds. Disputes within the Nuer tribe are often about cattle and about the ownership of pastures and water supplies necessary for their well-being. Cattle are paid in compensation for homicide and injury. It is the needs of the cattle which compel the yearly dry-season migration to fresh pastures.

Cattle form the bridewealth of the Nuer, that is, the successive transfers of cattle from the bridegroom's family to that of the bride marking the fact of marriage. Cattle are farmed out among friends as a precaution against the total destruction of a herd by disease; thus they tend to consolidate friendships and to maintain the network of relationships between people within a village and between the inhabitants of separate villages.

Family relationships are expressed in terms of cattle, as are the rules of incest and the status of an individual. Men take 'ox-names' - names which refer to the colour or other peculiarities of their favourite animals. In ritual cattle play an important part; they are sacrificed to the spirits and, when he desires to establish contact with ghosts and spirits, a man rubs ashes along the back of an animal, invoking the ancestral spirits as he does so. Cows are dedicated to the totemic spirits and the sky spirits. Daily life revolves round the needs of cattle; Nuer think cattle and talk cattle. Oxen are valued for display and prestige, and the merits of their favourite beasts are boasted of by their owners. Nuer language is rich in terms describing the various attributes of cattle. Tassels, decorations and carved tethering pegs are made by the owners, while the favourites in the herd will be played with, sung to and have poems made up about them. Young men will get boys to lead their favourite ox round the village for all to admire and will themselves leap behind it. Among the Nuer there is scarcely any aspect of life into which cattle do not enter and play an important part. Evans-Pritchard writes that the Nuer define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle and that their social idiom is a bovine idiom.

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(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.30.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

x 776 not now saying that God or Spirit is like this or that, but that this or that 'is' God or Spirit. Elucidation here does not, however, present great difficulties.

God being conceived of as in the sky, those celestial phenomena which are of particular significance for Nuer, rain and lightning, are said, in a sense we have to determine, to be him. There is no noun denoting either phenomenon and they can only be spoken of by verbs indicating a function of the sky, as *'ce nhial deam'*, 'the sky rained', and *'ce nhial mar'*, 'the sky thundered'. Also pestilences, murrains, death, and indeed almost any natural phenomenon significant for men are commonly regarded by Nuer as manifestations from above, activities of divine being. Even the earthly totems are conceived of as a relationship deriving from some singular intervention of Spirit from above in human affairs. It is chiefly by these signs that Nuer have knowledge of God. It might be held, therefore, that the Nuer conception of God is a conceptualization of events which, on account of their strangeness or variability as well as on account of their potentiality for fortune or misfortune, are said to be his activities or his activities in one or other of his hypostases or refractions. Support for such a view might be found in the way Nuer sometimes speak of one or other of these effects. They may say of rain or lightning or pestilence *'e kwoth'*, 'it is God', and in storms they pray to God to come to earth gently and not in fury—to come gently, it will be noted, not to make the rain come gently.

I do not discuss this ontological question here beyond saying that were we to suppose that such phenomena are in themselves regarded as God we would misunderstand and misrepresent Nuer religious thought, which is pre-eminently dualistic. It is true that for them there is no abstract duality of natural and supernatural, but there is such a duality between *kwoth*, Spirit, which is immaterial rather than supernatural, and *cak*, creation, the material world known to the senses. Rain and lightning and pestilences and murrains belong to this created world and are referred to by Nuer as *nyin kwoth*, instruments of God.

Nevertheless, they and other effects of significance for men are διοσημία, signs or manifestations of divine activity; and since Nuer apprehend divine activity in these signs, in God's revelation of himself to them in material forms, the signs are, in a lower medium, what they signify, so that Nuer may say of them *'e*